TWIN CITY LINES

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The Minnesota Streetcar Museum operates the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line in Minneapolis and the Excelsior Streetcar Line in Excelsior. Its mission is to preserve Minnesota's electric railway heritage.

The long, complex history of Nicollet Station

-Aaron Isaacs

There has been a transit facility at the corner of 31st Street and Nicollet Avenue since 1884. It started as a railroad roundhouse for the steam powered Motor Line, then became 31st Street Station and Shops, then Nicollet Station, then two generations of Nicollet Garage for buses.

In 1879 the narrow gauge, steam powered Minneapolis, Lyndale & Lake Calhoun Railway built south on Nicollet Avenue to 31st Street and west on 31st to Lake Calhoun. In 1880 it was extended another mile to reach Lake Harriet. In 1881, the company's name was changed to Minneapolis, Lyndale & Minnetonka, and construction began to extend the line to Excelsior. Those trains began running in 1882.

1884 saw the Motor Line grow a second branch, out Nicollet to 37th Street, then east on 37th to just beyond Hiawatha Avenue and out to Minnehaha Park.

By 1884 the Motor Line had outgrown its original shop building located north of 34th Street and east of Lake Calhoun. In June of that year it purchased land at 31st and Nicollet and built a somewhat unusual roundhouse. Facing northeast, the rear of it was squared off against the Blaisdell Avenue side of the property. Extending north along the east edge of Blaisdell toward 31st Street was a carhouse wing.

The Motor Line's Lake Minnetonka extension was cut back to Lake Calhoun in 1886 and re-extended to Lake Harriet in 1887. That same year track was built out Nicollet Avenue from 37th Street, where the Minnehaha Falls branch turned east, to 50th Street. At the same time, the Minneapolis Street Railway took control of the Motor Line.

The entire streetcar system, both steam-powered and horse-drawn, was converted to electricity in 1890-91. The former motor line was converted in 1890, and the roundhouse along with it. The line to Lake Harriet was rerouted via Hennepin Avenue in 1891, so the tracks on 31st Street from Nicollet to Hennepin remained to shuttle cars to and from the Lake Harriet and Bryant Avenue lines. New non-revenue track was built east on 31st Street from Nicollet to 4th Avenue S. in 1893, so 4th Avenue cars could access the station.

Once the roundhouse was electrified, TCRT began a rapid expansion of the facilities. The carhouse wing of the roundhouse was extended toward 31st Street and converted to a machine shop, store house and offices.

A 50-car brick carhouse, 31st Street Station, was built on the southeast corner of the property at 32nd and Nicollet, opening in June 1891. In 1892 the roundhouse became the general repair shop for the entire Twin Cities system.

TCRT began to design and build its own streetcars in 1898. To accommodate this work, it built a 359 x 136 foot (49,000 square foot) erecting shop at the southwest corner of the property. Abutting it to the east was an 11-track expansion of the carhouse. Over the next ten years 535 streetcars were built here (including our car 1239), along with the six Lake Minnetonka express boats.

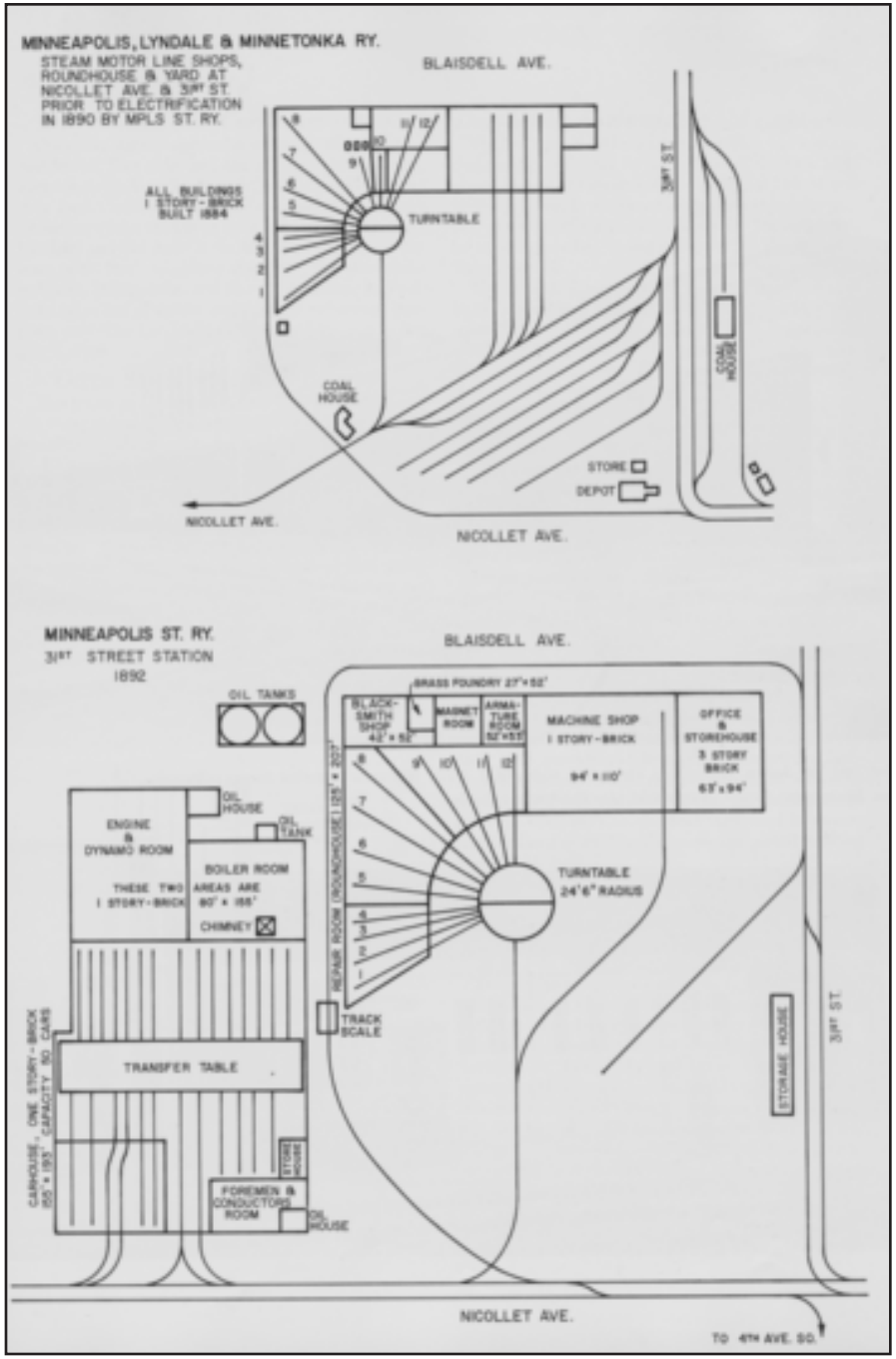
A streetcar factory required construction materials, and they arrived via an interchange with the Milwaukee Road at 29th and Nicollet. Before the Milwaukee's 29th Street line was grade separated starting in 1914 (we now know it as the Midtown Greenway), it crossed every south Minneapolis streetcar line at grade. The plat map from that period (see page 13) shows a spur and interchange track between the Milwaukee and the Nicollet Avenue line. Because of the sharp turning radius that would have challenged a steam locomotive, it's probable that work streetcars hauled freight cars from the interchange track to the shops. Coal, sand and salt were also probably delivered this way

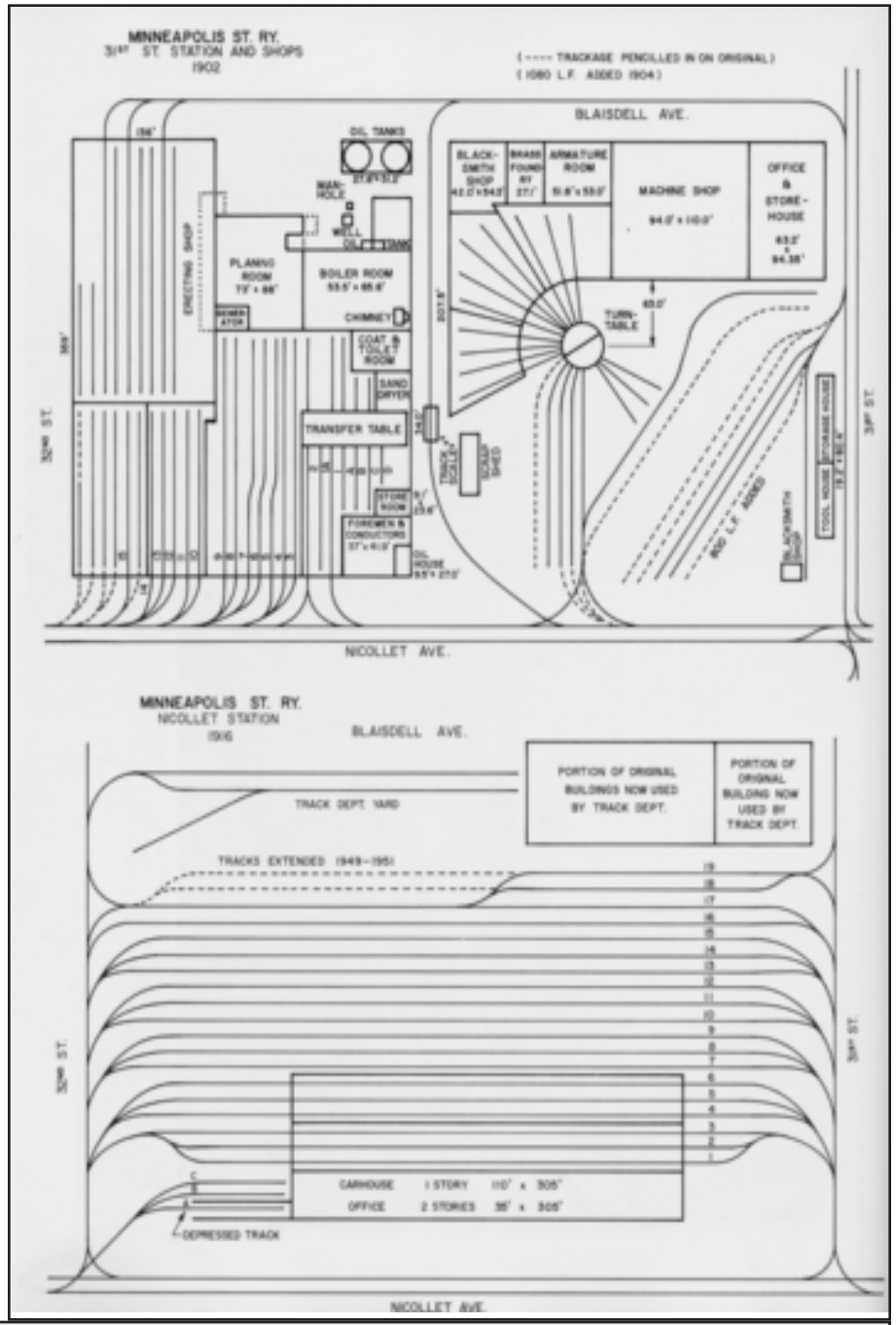
It should be noted that in 1905 a new streetcar line was opened on Lake Street from Hennepin Avenue to 31st Ave. S. This created a new route for streetcars deadheading between 31st Street Station and the various south Minneapolis car lines. The non-revenue trackage on 31st Street from Hennepin to 4th Avenue S. was removed.

Like all its contemporaries, 31st Street Station was wood-framed, which posed a major fire risk. It was also undersized in terms of both storage and shop space. Streetcar construction moved to the newly opened Snelling Shops in 1907. The 31st Street property was a hodgepodge of outmoded buildings and operationally was quite inefficient because all the tracks were stub-ended.

Snelling Station, opened along with the shops, was a concrete, fireproof

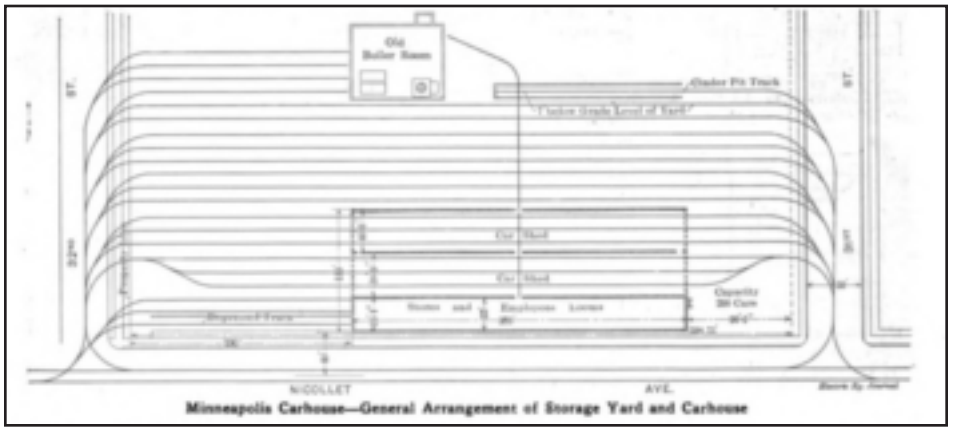
Front cover: You're looking at the rear of rail grinder #96, a former high speed suburban car, parked next to the Track Department building. Across 31st Street is the wall of Nicollet Ball Park.
Inside front cover: Nicollet Park and Nicollet Station during a game. Note the triple parked autos on 31st Street..





These maps from Electric Railways of Minnesota track the evolution of the 31st and Nicollet site. At upper left is the roundhouse as used by the steam powered Motor Line. Lower left shows the first carhouse. Upper right sees the addition of the shops and larger carhouse. Lower right is the completely rebuilt Nicollet Station.

The roundhouse was opened in 1884, and electrified in 1890, as the main shop for the entire TCRT system. It wasn't an ideal arrangement for streetcars.



Minneapolis Carhouse—General Arrangement of Storage Yard and Carhouse

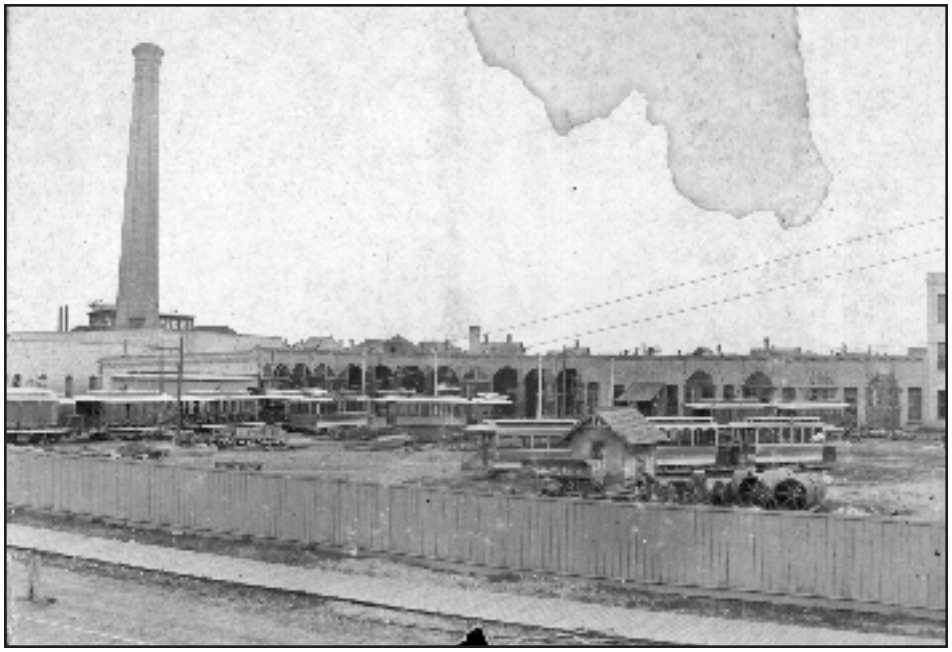
This map from the 1912 Street Railway Journal shows Nicollet Station as originally opened, with the old boiler room still in place.

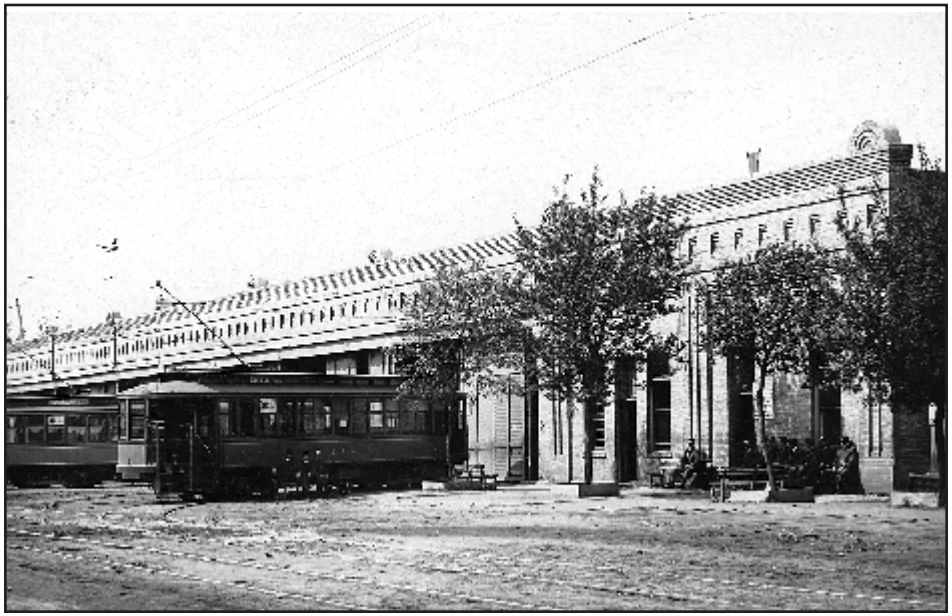
building that featured through tracks in the shops. This was much more efficient than the stub tracks at the old carbarns that required all streetcars to back into the building. Instead, the cars were stored in an open yard, also on through tracks. Snelling set the pattern for four very similar carhouses. Lake Street Station opened in 1910. The entirely new Nicollet Station replaced the 31st Street Station in 1912, followed by North Side in 1915.

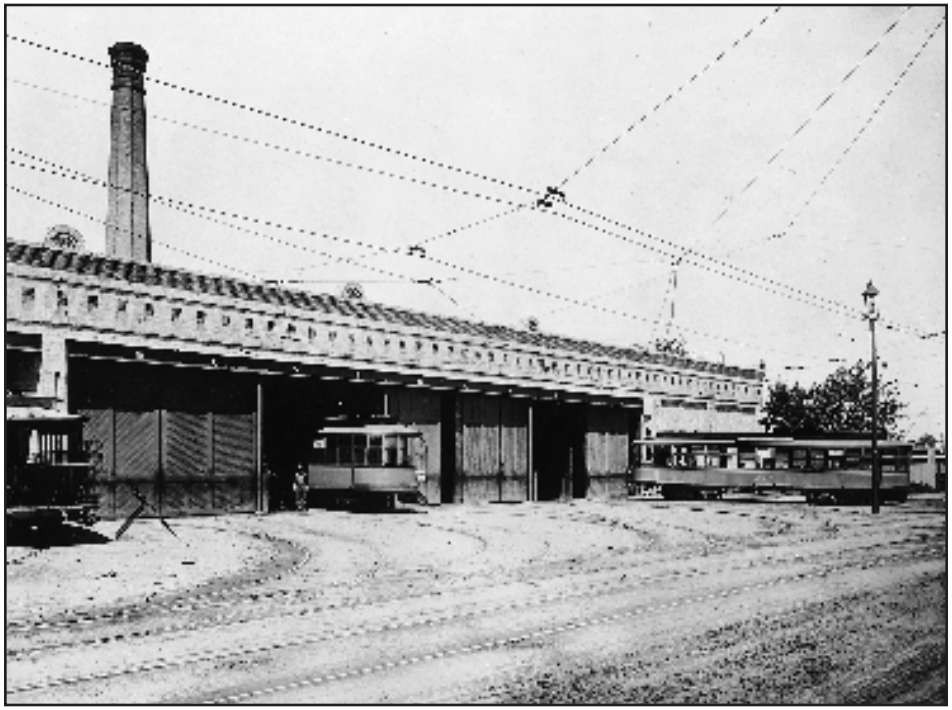
Some of the old infrastructure remained. The boiler room building continued to supply heat to all the buildings. The Minneapolis Track Department occupied the roundhouse and its wing. That continued until 1916 when a new boiler was installed in the new station building. The boiler room building and most of the roundhouse were demolished, freeing up space for more yard tracks. However, the roundhouse wing along Blaisdell Avenue remained in place until the end of service, occupied by the Track Department.

Thereafter Nicollet remained unchanged until 1949, when tracks 7-9 were replaced by new bus bays added to the west wall of the shop building. To make up for the lost track space, short tracks 18 and 19, the westernmost in the yard and previously blocked by the boiler house, were doubled in length.

Nicollet had a capacity of 158 cars, including 36 inside the carhouse shop tracks. In later years it ran the Nicollet-2nd Street NE-North West Terminal, Glenwood-4th Avenue, Bryant-Johnson and Grand-Monroe lines, plus some Interurban extras to the University of Minnesota. Nicollet was also admirably located to run extras for Minneapolis Millers games at Nicollet Ball Park, its neighbor across 31st Street. After 1949 it hosted the buses of the Nicollet-Hennepin and 38th Street lines, the West 39th Street-Linden Hills shuttle and the shuttle extensions of a couple of the streetcar lines.







Top left: Another view of the roundhouse in the early 1890s, with many former horse-cars is evidence.
Lower left and right: Two views of the Nicollet Avenue side of 31st Street Station in about 1905.

Top right: This is the only view we've seen of the 32nd and Blaisdell corner of the 31st Street Shops.

Nicollet and North Side Stations both saw their last streetcars on July 10, 1953. The Nicollet Avenue line continued in service until March 27, 1954, but it was running out of East Side Station.

Like North Side, new bus bays were added that pretty much filled the city block. A new shop expansion was added at the corner of 31st and Nicollet. Nicollet Garage now had a capacity, on paper at least, of 282 buses. Although that many could be squeezed onto the property, the shop really couldn't handle them. Until Nicollet was torn down and replaced by a new garage in 1990, the rails remained visible in the shop floor and were referred to as 1 Track through 6 Track.

The old trainmen's club rooms upstairs were converted into Twin City Rapid Transit's corporate offices, moved there when the company vacated its 11th and Hennepin office building.

Metro Transit purchased TCRT in 1970 and replaced the private management in the upstairs of Nicollet. In the mid-1970s the first floor driver's room and dispatch area received a cosmetic makeover. However, the building's HVAC was on life support and on one very cold winter day a bus engine in one of the bays froze completely.

The Metro Transit HQ moved from Nicollet to St. Paul about 1980. In 1984, Metro Transit opened a new office building next to the Fred T. Heywood Garage in north Minneapolis, a couple blocks north of where Target Field is today. The old Nicollet Garage continued to house the Transit Control Center and Transit Information Center for a couple of years. It was demolished in 1989 and replaced by the new Nicollet Garage that remains on the site today, 132 years and counting.

Above: Nicollet shortly after construction, with the boiler room building and 8 of the 12 roundhouse stalls still standing.

Left: After a boiler was installed in the new carhouse, the old boiler room was demolished to make room for more storage tracks.

These four views circle the Nicollet Station storage yard.
Above: Viewed from Nicollet Ball Park shortly after Nicollet opened in 1912.
Below: Looking north toward the ballpark, with the Track Department building at left.
Note that each car had a spare trolley pole.

Above: Until 1949, when they were extended, tracks 18-19 were short, avoiding the location of the old boiler house.
Below: Trailer trains fill two tracks of the yard in the 1920s, as viewed from the car-house roof with the ballpark wall in the distance.

Above: A PCC car turns off Nicollet Avenue onto 32nd Street.

Below: This is the south end of the carhouse. Art Rusterholz photo.

Above: A pullin from downtown via Lyndale Avenue and Lake Street navigates the track ladder on 32nd Street.
Below: The coal bunker on the Blaisdell side of the property. Note electric shovel #73, used to unload the coal from work cars. Both Norman Rolfe photos.

For many years the landscaped “Nicollet” adorned this berm at the corner of 31st Street and Nicollet.

Below: A track on the south side of the carhouse was depressed for coal deliveries. Robert Selle photo.

In 1949 tracks 7-9 were mostly removed so that new bus bays could be erected.
Above left: The new bays under construction, viewed from the south.
Above right: The north end of the new bus bays. Robert Selle photo.
Below: Homemade wood trailers used by the Track Department along Nicollet Ave.

Nicollet Station was ideal for staging streetcars for ball games at Nicollet Park.
Above: About 1911. Below: About 1948.

Middle column: Trainmen pose in the late 1890s (mustaches, brass hat badges), and in 1912 (clean shaven, large black number badges on the hats).

Above: Clearing switches in the south yard. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

Right: Supplies of lumber and coal arrived at 31st Street Station via this interchange with the Milwaukee Road at 29th Street. The sharp turn onto Nicollet Avenue almost certainly meant that work trolleys pulled the cars from the interchange to the carhouse and shops.

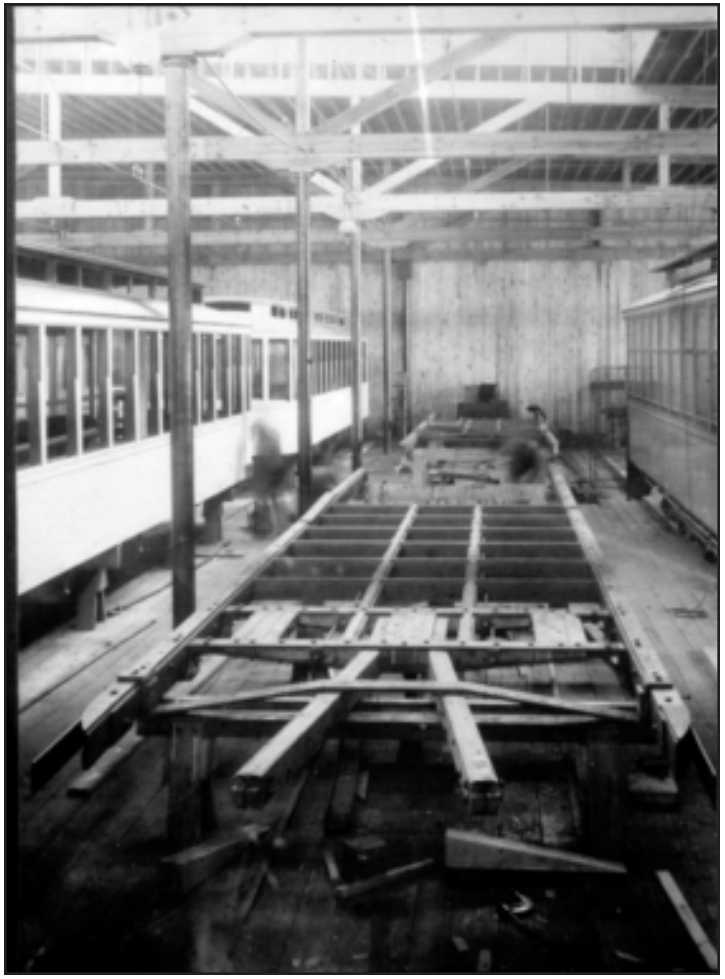
Inside 31st Street Shops

This is a heavily edited version of a story that appeared in the February 15, 1899 issue of the Street Railway Review.

The Twin City Rapid Transit Company does a great deal of its own work, probably more than most other roads of the same size, and has extensive shops occupying an entire block in Minneapolis, bounded by West 31st and West 32nd streets and Nicollet and Blaisdell avenues, south.

The building on the northwest corner of the lot was built in 1890; it is occupied by the general storehouse and the offices of the purchasing agent and general storekeeper, the engineer and roadmaster, and the master mechanic, W. M. Brown. The vice president, Mr. Goodrich, and the general manager. Mr. Hield, keep in very close touch with the work at the shops, and usually spend a portion of each day there, as all requisitions of the purchasing agent and all requisitions on the general storehouse must be approved by the manager. Two rooms on the second floor have recently been fitted up as offices for Messrs. Goodrich and Hield, so that the records, plans, etc., which they wish to keep at this building can be more conveniently arranged.

The greater portion of the building joining the storehouse on the south was built in 1884 and was the shop of the Minneapolis, Lyndale & Minnetonka Railway Company (a steam road), which was purchased by the Twin City Company. It is, of course, no longer operated by steam. Various additions have been made to the original building, and it now comprises the machine shop, the armature room, the brass foundry the blacksmith shop, and the general repair shop.



Above: Fabricating a streetcar's wood underframe in 1899. Steel underframes appeared in 1905.
Facing page: A streetcar takes shape inside 31st Street Shops.

All the repairs for the system are made here, as it is found cheaper to haul disabled cars and apparatus from St. Paul than to keep up the shops and storehouses that would be necessary to make repairs at the car houses. The machine shop regularly employs about 45 men. The tool room occupies one corner of the shop, and in it are a milling machine, a lathe, and two grinders kept exclusively for toolmaking. The gear and pinion work, turning trolley wheels, etc. furnish work for several machines.

The cast wheels used are ground and the steel tired wheels turned down in this shop. The company had some trouble with cast wheels breaking under the heavy cars, and now very generally uses steel tired wheels for the motor axles. Throughout the shop the shafting has been carefully arranged so that portions of it may be cut out when the machines are not needed. The shop is driven by one of the discarded traction generators rewound for a motor.

In the armature shop about 13 men are employed, the company doing all its own repair work. One of the labor saving devices here is a shellac stirrer; the shellac is in a barrel mounted in

bearings and belted to the line shaft, so that it is always stirred. To draw off shellac for use the belt is thrown off and the barrel stopped. In the armature room are motor cases and brakes for quickly testing armatures.

The brass foundry employs four men, who usually make three heats per day each. All the brass castings used are made here.

The blacksmith shop is equipped with eight forges, a steam hammer and a trip hammer. There are now 26 men employed, working in day and night shifts.

The general repair shop, while it employs 31 men, is in what was the round house of the railroad. There are 12 pits, three of which are long enough to take two cars. One of the pits is fitted especially for dropping the wheels and axles from under cars. The screws moving the wheel platforms are driven from the line shaft. Outside is the turntable, and several tracks for temporarily storing cars are laid in the yard. The scrap pile is also here.

South of the buildings already described is the power station and car house of the company, built in 1891. The car house is still so used. It is approximately, 280 ft. x 158 ft., and has 14 tracks. In one corner is a room for the foreman and car service employees.

The boiler room still has its equipment, seven Stirling boilers, but only enough of these are used to heat the shops. The engines and generators formerly in the room south of this have been moved and a small space in one corner partitioned off for the 600-h. p. converter and the three transformers, which constitute the equipment of substation No. 2. The rest of the old engine and dynamo room is now filled with wood-working machinery and called the mill room.

South of the car house is the new car shop, which was completed in April, 1898. The north wall is formed by the old car house. At the ends are 14-ft. doors for the entrance and exit of cars, with windows where the wall spaces admit. There are six monitors in the roof, each 20 ft. x 52 ft., affording ample light. The roof is 4-ply gravel supported on wooden trusses. The clear space under the trusses is 16 ft.

Walls have been erected in the exterior corner of the car shop and mill room buildings, forming a two-story building 14 ft. x 36 ft., inside measurement, which is marked office in the general plan. The lower floor is occupied by the stock room, where are kept the bolts, screws, etc. The upper floor is occupied by the master mechanic as his car shop office. The office is reached from the car shop by a flight of stairs, and from the gallery which extends along the side of the office the whole shop is in plain view. Windows in the east wall of the office give a similar view of the mill room, and the yard where lumber is stored may be seen from the exterior windows. The whole office is most conveniently arranged to enable a man lo keep the shop under his eye.

The car shop is 11 tracks wide. The south side, is set apart for the paint shop, and this portion has a cement floor with drains to the sewer, so that cars sent in for painting can be conveniently washed here. Throughout the rest of the building the floor is of wood. Arc lamps are provided for lighting, when necessary. Steam pipes are carried along the walls for heating, and in cold weather these radiators are supplemented by hot air from a Sturtevant plant.

The mill room is well equipped with machinery for wood-working. There are 74 men in the car shop, not includ-

ing 13 painters. The capacity of the shop is eight cars per month. It was first opened in April, 1898, though not at that time completely finished. Last year 22 cars of the company's standard type were built and an order of 30 is now going through the shop.

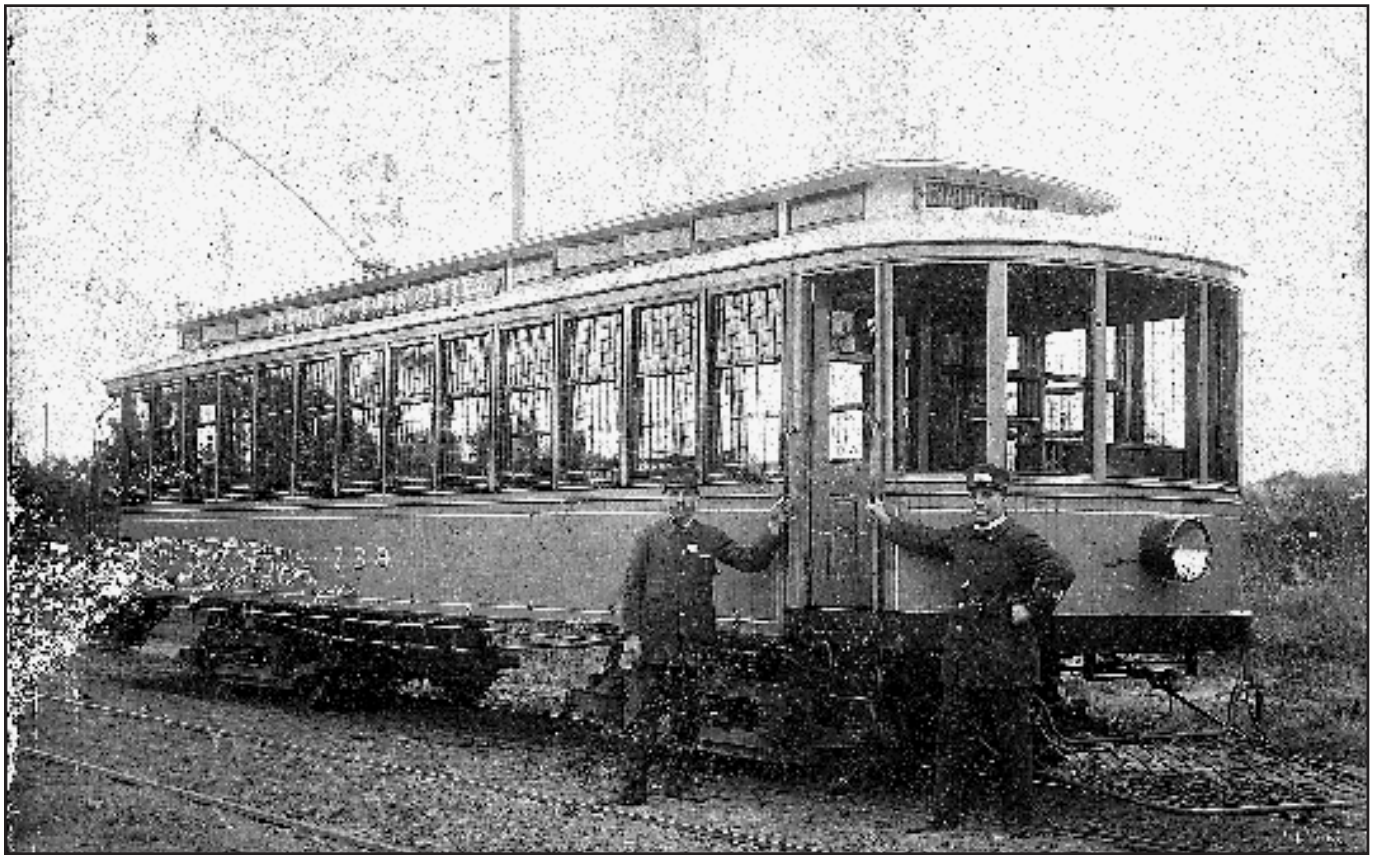
The master mechanic, W. M. Brown, has been with the company for seven years, and has occupied his present position for over three years. He has had an extended experience in car building, and designed the company's standard car.

The new cars are regarded with considerable pride by the officers of the company, who feel that no road has any better cars. The greatest care is taken in the selection of material and in the construction, and the aim has been to build the best car possible.

These cars are designed for both summer and winter service; the two sashes may be slipped down into the side of the car making practically an open car.

This car seats 49 or 51 persons according as the heater is cover is not in place. As an experiment one car was fitted with seats upholstered in leather, but the Hale & Kilburn rattan seats were decided upon as preferable, particularly for warm weather. The seat arms are brass, and were cast in the shop, as were also all the fittings.

The car is heated with the Baker hot water heater, and lighted by 20 electric lamps. Electric headlights of the company's own design are used.



Top: Car 738 was one of two prototype homebuilt cars produced in 1898. Here it is in Sightseer service.

Bottom: Cars #1246-1265 were the last to emerge from 31st Street Shops in mid-1907, before production moved to Snelling Shops. Bob Mehlenbeck photo.

Nicollet Station—1912

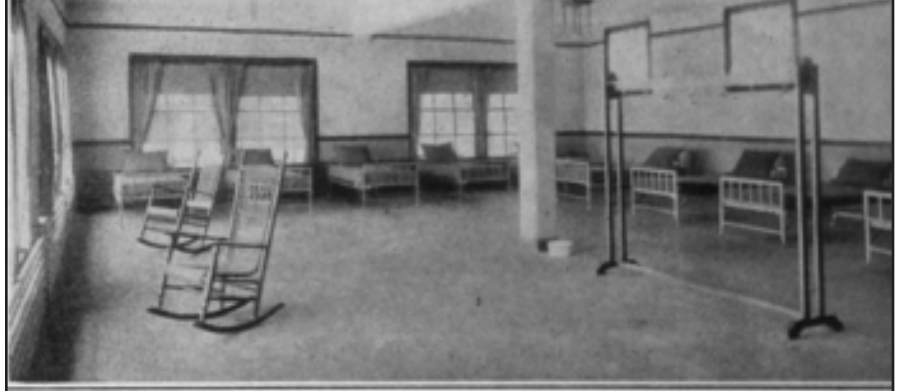
In order to build the new Nicollet Station starting in 1911, TCRT demolished the 31st Street Station and Shops. For awhile the roundhouse and the boiler house were retained, but that was temporary. After 1916, the boiler house was gone and all that remained of the roundhouse was the wing along the Blaisdell (west) side of the property that housed the Minneapolis Track Department.

The new station was a major improvement over the old mishmash of facilities. Almost all tracks, in the yard and through the station itself, were through tracks. This eliminated the need to back cars in or out, much more convenient, faster and certainly safer. The carhouse was designed to be fireproof, constructed of reinforced concrete rather than wood, and with fire doors between the shop bays. The number of cars that could be stored and serviced was about 50 percent greater than before.

The yard was illuminated at night, also a safety improvement. The maintenance pits in the shop area were heated and lighted, a definite improvement in working conditions. The shop doors were motorized, taking 35 seconds to open and 15 seconds to close. They were also designed to fit snugly to reduce air infiltration and were two-ply, with an internal air space to help keep out the cold.

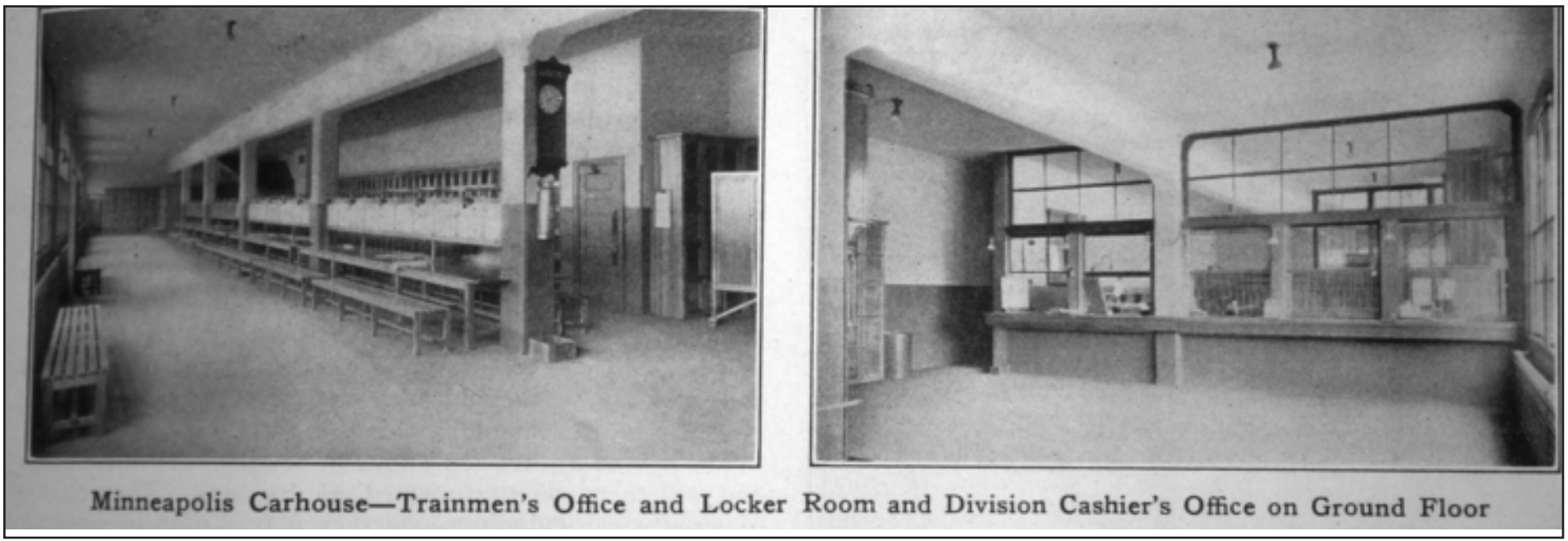
The basement was devoted to parts storage and the heating plant. The ground floor contained the dispatch offices, where trainmen reported to work and were assigned runs and streetcars. The entire second floor was the trainmen's club rooms. There were three pool tables, a reading room and a dormitory for anyone who had to work into the evening, followed by an early morning pullout.

To quote from an article about the new station in the Electric Railway Journal, "As the Twin City Rapid Transit Company has made it a rule to recruit its men from the rural districts rather than from the city, a large number of the unmarried trainmen have no attractive place in which to spend their time off duty. The interest they are taking in the club rooms which the company has furnished at all division carhouses is an evidence of their appreciation of what has been done by management."

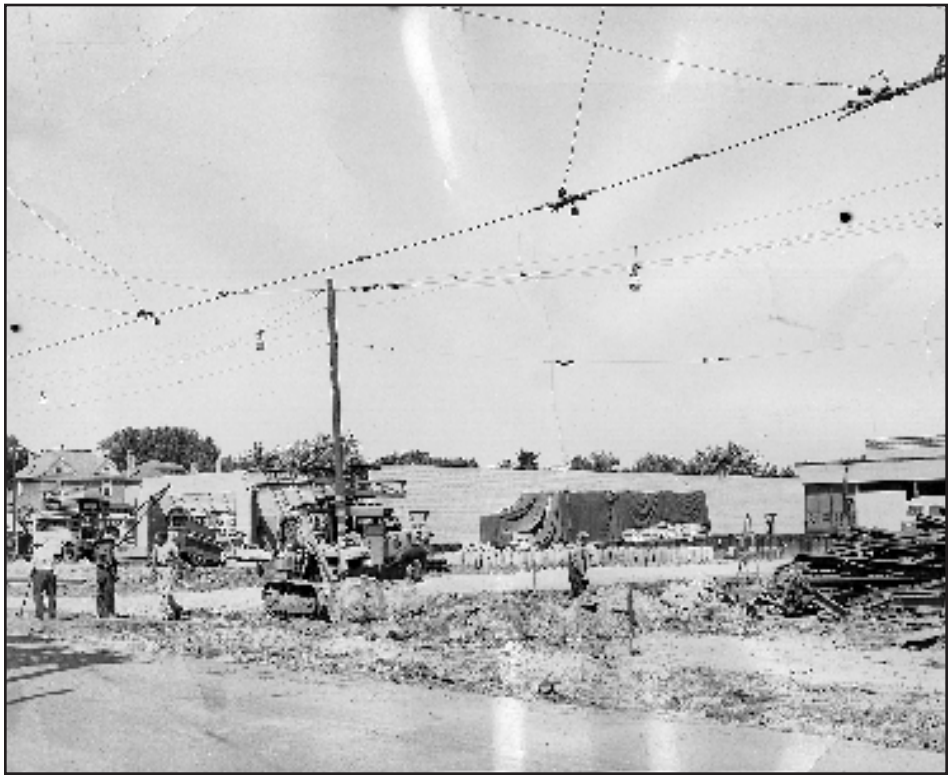


Minneapolis Carhouse—Trainmen's Rest Room

Minneapolis Carhouse—Reading Room



Minneapolis Carhouse—Trainmen's Office and Locker Room and Division Cashier's Office on Ground Floor



Above left and right: In 1953 Nicollet was closed to streetcars and the conversion to a 100 percent bus garage was underway.

Below left: The 1912 building, expanded for buses, also housed Metro Transit's headquarters during the 1970s.
Below right: The new Nicollet Garage opened in 1990.

Owl Cars

-Aaron Isaacs

In the early decades of Twin Cities transit service, there was no all-night service, later dubbed "owl cars". Service ended about 11 PM. According to a newspaper story, owl service on several Minneapolis local lines began in 1903. It had started earlier on the University Avenue and Como Avenue lines between Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Owl cars generally ran hourly from midnight to 5 AM. At no other times of the day did the streetcars run so infrequently, and for that reason it was organized quite differently from the rest of the schedule.

During all other hours, service was frequent enough that transfers between lines were mostly made at random. The old transit cliché is that riders don't need to consult a schedule if the connecting lines run at least every ten minutes. Some lines during off-peak hours ran only every 20-30 minutes, but with few exceptions transfers still occurred at random. The only timed transfers in the system involved a small number of shuttle connections to line haul routes (Western Avenue to the Como-Harriet, the Fort Snelling shuttle to the St. Paul and Minneapolis cars, the Stillwater local lines and the Lake Minnetonka steamboat connections).

However, in the middle of the night, with only hourly service, it was necessary to time connections downtown to ensure that transfers between cars were not missed. The owl concept called for all streetcars to arrive downtown a few minutes before the hour, exchange passengers, and leave on the hour or a couple of minutes after.

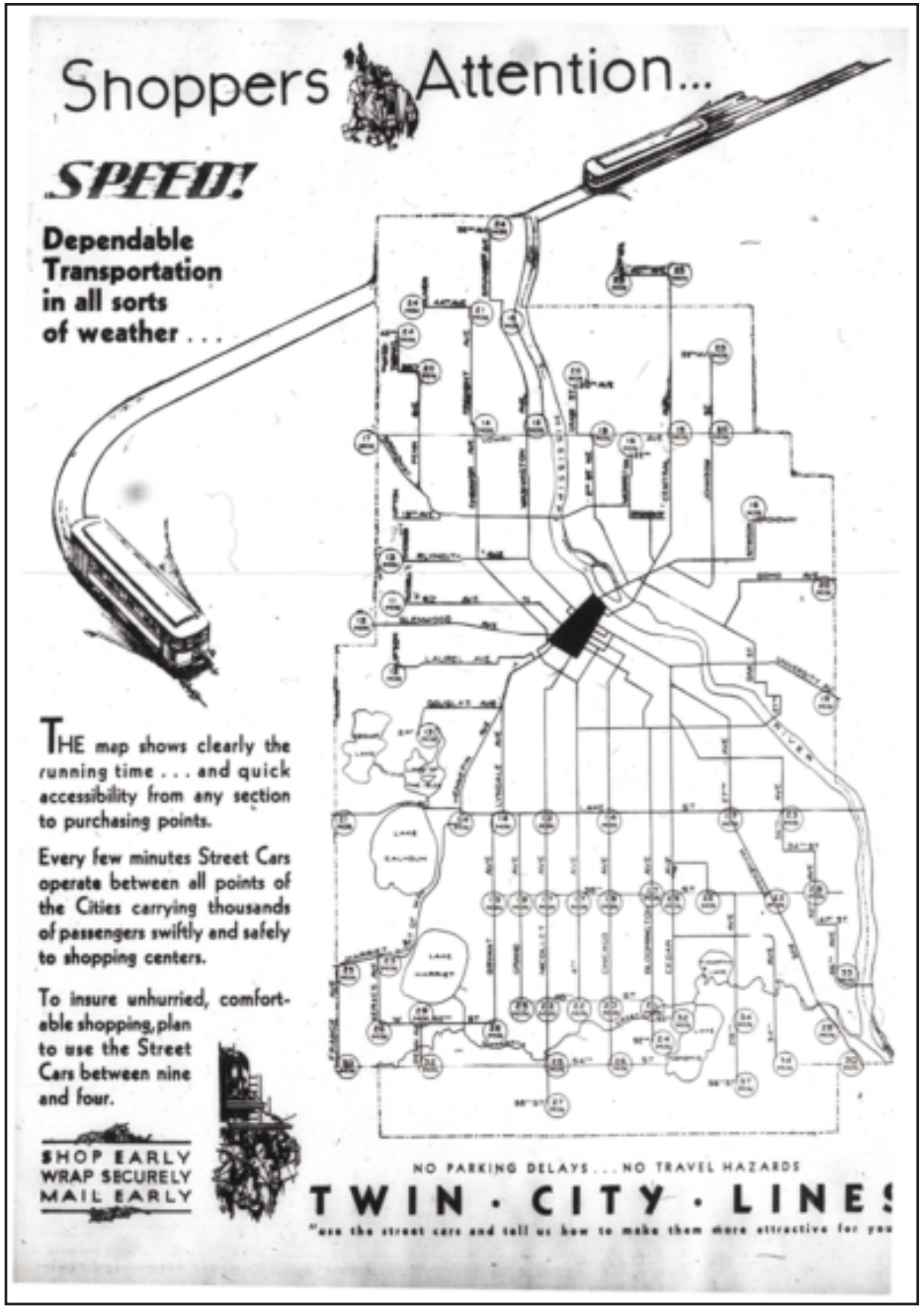
That was the plan. Implementing it was not always easy. There were three problems:

1. Some of the routes were almost too long for an hourly cycle.
2. Some of the routes were too short.
3. Within the downtowns, some lines were located several blocks apart and did not cross, requiring passengers to walk some distance.

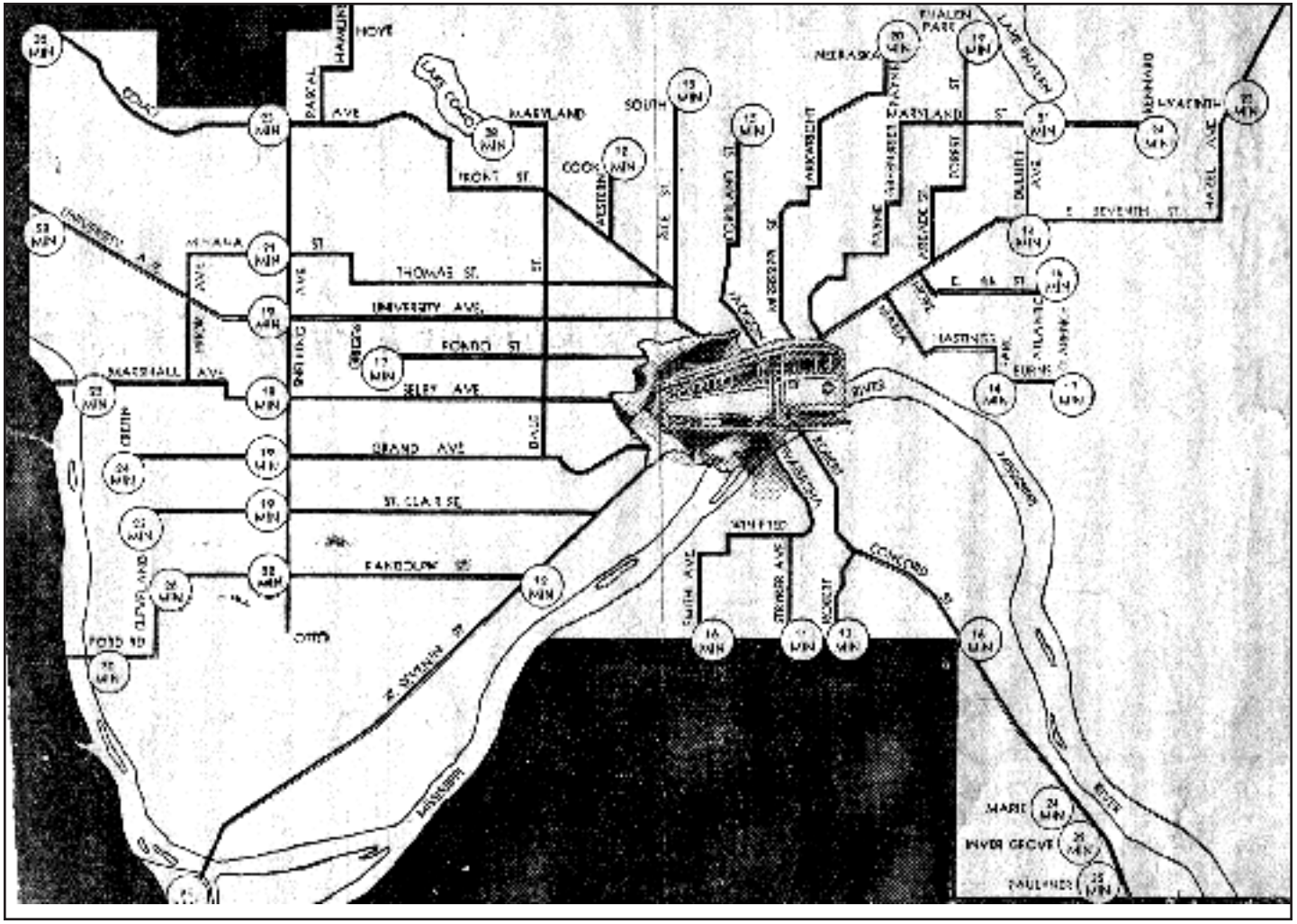
Ridership in the wee hours tended to be pretty light. To minimize costs, the ideal schedule called for each line radiating from downtown to be served by a single streetcar making a round trip once an hour. This worked well on quite a few lines where the round trip running time was 50-55 minutes (see running time maps). A good example was the Penn Avenue line in north Minneapolis. Its one-way running time from 8th and Hennepin, the owl transfer point, to the 42nd & Thomas terminal was 24 minutes. Add a couple of minutes to turn the car on the 42nd & Thomas wye and a round trip took 50 minutes. That allowed 10 minutes downtown to make the hourly owl connections.

Some routes, however, had normal daytime running time in excess of 30 minutes each way. According to the running time map at right, one-way running times of 30 minutes or more occurred on the East 25th Street line (downtown to the Ford Plant), Minnehaha line (Minneapolis to Fort Snelling), 28th Avenue S. line (downtown to 56th Street), 34th Avenue S. (downtown to 54th Street) and Como-Harriet (downtown to 54th & France) and Bryant-Penn to 54th Street.

Were they able to make a one-hour cycle with a single streetcar, or was a second car required? Because documentation is sparse, we have to guess. It appears that they shortened running time sufficiently to make it work. Thus a 35-minute trip to the Ford Plant was accelerated to about 28 minutes. That was possible because ridership was



Above and next page: Newspaper ads featured maps of the system with travel times. These were typical of daytime schedules. Owl cars traveled much faster.



light and auto traffic was minimal, so faster travel times were possible.

We get a glimpse of how much faster from Ed Nelson's operating notes. He says Motorman #525 Cleon Cain's Como-Harriet car went dead at 3 AM at 5th and Robert in downtown St. Paul. A shopman got him going at 3:50 AM and he made it to 44th and France at 4:35 AM in time to leave on schedule. That's 45 minutes for a trip scheduled for 77 minutes in daytime. Streetcars had no speedometers, but the speed limited was certainly exceeded.

The second problem was lines that were too short. Quite a few had one-way running times of less than 15 minutes. A round trip within 60 minutes was easy, but nothing offended the efficiency-minded TCRT management more than having a streetcar sit at a layover for half of its on-duty time.

The answer was for a single car to cover two of these short lines each hour. For example, the Plymouth Avenue car arrived downtown, then ran a quick round trip on the equally short Glenwood Avenue line. In St. Paul the Concord Avenue and South Robert Street lines were covered by the same car. That meant that one of the two lines hit downtown on the half-hour, and any passengers needing to transfer had to wait 30 minutes for a connection. However, only about 25 percent of the riders were transfer passengers, so ¾ of the riders were reasonably served.

Transfer point locations

The third operating challenge was the separation of lines on different streets.

In Minneapolis the main transfer point changed in 1926 from Hennepin & Washington to Hennepin & 5th Street. This reflected the shift in the center of downtown from Washington Avenue south toward 7th Street. In 1920, the heavy Chicago-Penn-Fremont line had moved from Washington Avenue to a new North Side short cut that passed through downtown on 8th Street. Coordinating transfers between lines that were six blocks apart was not working well.

Moving the transfer points to 5th Street required the late night diversion of the Lake Nokomis-Camden and Fort Snelling-Plymouth lines from Washington Avenue to 5th Street. At all other times they stayed on Washington.

According to a newspaper article, the reason for moving the transfer point from Washington Avenue to 5th Street was the inability of the Nicollet line to make a round trip to Diamond Lake Road within 60 minutes. Moving the transfer point to 5th Street shortened the line by three blocks.

The result was that six lines met at 5th and Hennepin. There was a normally a full time starter there to coordinate operations, and it seems likely the position was staffed overnight, given the precision required to make all the timed connections. Three lines were located a block away at 6th and Hennepin or 5th and 1st Avenue N., a walk of only a minute or two. However, five lines required a longer walk. Chicago-Fremont was at 8th & Hennepin (3 blocks away), and Nicollet-2nd Street NE was at 5th & Marquette (2 blocks). Furthest away were Grand-Monroe and

OWL
STREET CAR LINE-UP

EFFECTIVE
APRIL 1, 1926

Will Be as Follows

Line	Direction	Point	Leaving Time Hourly
Como-Harriet	East & West	5th & Hennepin	1:00 A.M. to 5:00 A.M.
Oak-Harriet	West	5th & Hennepin	1:00 A.M. to 5:00 A.M.
Kenwood-E. 25th St.	East & South	5th & Hennepin	1:00 A.M. to 5:00 A.M.
St. Paul-Mpls. & 6th Av. N.	North & East	5th & Hennepin	1:00 A.M. to 5:00 A.M.
*Lake Nokomis—Camden	North & South	5th & Hennepin	1:00 A.M. to 5:00 A.M.
*Ft. Snelling-M'haha-Plymouth	North & South	5th & Hennepin	1:00 A.M. to 5:00 A.M.
Western-4th Av. S.	North & South	6th & Hennepin	1:01 A.M. to 5.01 A.M.
Chicago-Fremont	North & South	8th & Hennepin	1:03 A. M. to 5:03 A.M.
Chicago-Penn	North	1st Av. N. & 5th St.	1:01 A.M. to 5.01 A.M.
Bryant-Johnson	North & South	1st Av. N. & 5th St.	1:01 A.M. to 5.01 A.M.
Nicollet-2d St. N.E.	North & South	5th & Marquette	1:02 A. M. to 5:02 A.M.
Grand-Monroe	East	2d Av. S. & 4th St.	1:03 A. M. to 5:03 A.M.
Bloom. Av.-Columbia Heights	East	2d Av. S. & 4th St.	1:03 A. M. to 5:03 A.M.
Bloom. Av.-Columbia Heights	South	2d Av. S. & 4th St.	1:05 A.M. to 5:05 A.M.

The Owl line-up on Washington avenue will be discontinued when the above schedule goes into effect April 1, 1926, and there will be NO OWL CAR SERVICE ON WASHINGTON AVENUE BETWEEN FIRST AVENUE NORTH AND SECOND AVENUE SOUTH.

*The Lake Nokomis-Camden and Ft. Snelling-Minnehaha-Plymouth line northbound Owl cars will operate via Washington Avenue to Second Avenue South to Fifth Street, to First Avenue North, to Washington Avenue, and vice versa on southbound trips.

GIVE THE STREET CARS THE RIGHT OF WAY

THE TRADE MARK OF A FRIEND

This photo and the one on page 23 were taken by the Pioneer Press to document the Christmas lights, but they also show the wee hours downtown. This view looks east on 7th Street from Wabasha. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

Two views of the 7th & Wabasha transfer point.

Left: A Hamline-Cherokee car boards on Wabasha at 7th Street. Behind it is Rondo-Stryker bus.

Right: During most of the overnight hours, 7th and Wabasha looked like this, very quiet. The owl cars appeared a few minutes before each hour. Note the TCRT inspector's booth just beyond the three gentlemen at right.

Both St. Paul Pioneer Press, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

Bloomington-Columbia Heights, at 2nd Avenue S. and 4th Street. That's four blocks from 5th & Hennepin and 7 blocks from 8th & Hennepin. It should be noted, however, that transfers with the Chicago-Penn-Fremont cars could be made at 2nd Avenue S., where the lines were only two blocks apart.

In St. Paul the main transfer point was originally 7th and Wabasha. This shifted at some later date to 5th and Robert.

Because the owls were lightly patronized, they were an early target for cost cutting through the elimination of conductors on the heavy lines, that otherwise stayed 2-man through World War II and even later. The owl cars went 1-man by 1935.

According to a 1939 company memo, owl ridership had long been in decline. There were plans to eliminate owls on every second parallel line, or cut the frequency to every two hours. Some of the weaker owls disappeared along with the lines themselves. The Kenwood, South Robert Street, Jackson, Stryker, Rondo and East 4th Street lines all disappeared before 1950. However, Ed Nelson's notes show owls in 1952 on most lines in Minneapolis.

Owl buses lasted into the mid-1960s bus service. They were revived in the 1990s on a handful of lines. The results were mixed, but they survive on the Interurban's successor, the Green Line, and a couple of other heavy bus routes.


SCHUNEMAN'S
DEL REY SHOPS
Walgreen Drugs
ADAM HATS
LINPARK
CLOTHES

This is the best photo ever taken of the downtown Minneapolis owl lineup at 5th and Hennepin in 1949. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

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August 2021

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